



United States Department of Agriculture

National Agricultural Statistics Service, Statistic Division

CHARTER

1. Committee's Official Designation

The committee shall be known as the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics, hereafter referred to as the Committee or the ACAS.

2. Authority

The Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics is chartered under the authority of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture. The ACAS charter is being renewed and operates in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. App. 2.

3. Objectives and Scope of Activities

Effective October 1, 1996, responsibility for the census of agriculture program was transferred to USDA. Responsibility for the Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics was transferred, along with its OMB allocated slot, to USDA when the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) received funding and responsibility for the census of agriculture beginning in fiscal year 1997. The purpose of the Committee is to advise the Secretary on the conduct of the periodic censuses and surveys of agriculture, other related surveys, and the types of agricultural information to obtain from respondents. The committee also prepares recommendations regarding the content of agriculture reports, and presents the views and needs for data of major suppliers and users of agriculture statistics. The committee draws on the experience and expertise of its members to form a collective judgment concerning agriculture data collected and the statistics issued by NASS. This input is vital to keep current with shifting data needs in the rapidly changing agricultural environment and keep NASS informed of emerging developments and issues in the agriculture community that can affect agriculture statistics activities. The renewal of this Committee charter is in the public interest in accordance with the duties the law imposes on the Department.

4. Description of Duties

The duties of the Committee are solely advisory in nature. The Committee makes recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture with regard to the agricultural statistics program of NASS, and such other matters as it may deem advisable, or which the Secretary of Agriculture, Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics, or the Administrator of NASS may request.

5. Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports

The Committee reports to the Secretary of Agriculture through the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics.

6. Support

A representative of NASS will serve as the Executive Secretary to the Committee. In addition, NASS will provide administrative staff support to the Committee.

7. Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years

Annual operating costs are estimated to be \$70,000. In addition, staff year requirements are estimated to be 0.2 full time equivalents. Committee members serve without pay if they are not officers or employees of the Federal Government. In the performance of their duties away from their homes or regular places of business, Committee members may be allowed reimbursement for travel expenses including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by 5 U.S.C. 5703.

8. Designated Federal Officer

A permanent Federal employee is to be appointed in accordance with agency procedures and will serve as the Designated Federal Official (DFO). The DFO will approve the advisory committee's and subcommittees' meetings, prepare and approve all meeting agendas, attend all committee and subcommittee meetings, adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest, and chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.

9. Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings

The full Committee meets approximately once a year. The subcommittees will meet as deemed necessary by the Chairperson with permission of the DFO. ACAS meetings and subcommittee meetings will be open to the public. Interested persons may attend meetings, appear before the ACAS, or file comments with the ACAS.

10. Duration

Continuing.

11. Termination

The Committee shall terminate two years from the date this charter is filed, unless the Secretary of Agriculture determines prior to that date that continuation of work is not in the public interest. This charter will be in effect for two years from the date it is filed with Congress. After this two-year period, the charter may be renewed in accordance with Section 14 of FACA (5 U.S.C. App. 2 § 14).

12. Membership and Designation

12a. This Committee will be fairly balanced in its membership in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed. Steps will be taken to encourage fresh points of view, such as establishing staggered membership terms and limiting the number of renewed memberships.

12b. The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. The Secretary of Agriculture will appoint the membership of the Committee. Furthermore, members will serve for two-year terms, and can serve no more than three consecutive terms. Membership will consist of 20 individuals with diverse capabilities distinguished by their broad range of knowledge and interest in, though not limited to, agricultural economics, rural sociology, farm policy analysis, and agricultural education. Members will also be drawn from representatives of state and local governments; agriculture-related industry and trade or marketing associations; major national farm organizations; and producer organizations.

12c. Of these members, one will become the chairperson (elected by agreement of a simple majority of members) who is recognized for his or her ability to lead a group in a fair and focused manner and who has been briefed on the mission of this Committee. A co-chairperson may be assigned, in the same manner as the chair, especially to facilitate his or her transition to become the chairperson in the future. The Chairperson of the Committee shall be elected by members to serve a one-year term. A representative from the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, and a representative from the Economic Research Service, USDA, shall serve as ex officio members of the Committee.

12d. Ethics Statement

To maintain the highest levels of honesty, integrity and ethical conduct, no Committee or subcommittee member shall participate in any "specific party matters" (i.e., matters are narrowly focused and typically involve specific transactions between identified parties) such as a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, grant, agreement, or related litigation with the Department in which the member has a direct or indirect financial interest. This includes the requirement for Committee or Subcommittee members to immediately disclose to the DFO any specific party matter in which the member's immediate family, relatives, business partners or employer would be directly seeking to financially benefit from the Committee's recommendations. Members of the Board shall be required to disclose their direct or indirect interest in leases, licenses, permits, contracts, or claims grants, or agreements that involve lands or resources administered by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, or in any litigation related thereto.

All members will receive ethics training to identify and avoid any actions that would cause the public to question the integrity of the Committee's advice and recommendations. Members who are appointed as "Representatives" are not subject to Federal ethics laws because such appointment allows them to represent the point(s) of view of a particular group, business sector or segment of the public.

Members appointed as "Special Government Employees" (SGEs) are considered intermittent Federal employees and are subject to Federal ethics laws. SGE's are appointed due to their personal knowledge, academic scholarship, background or expertise. No SGE may participate in any activity in which the member has a prohibited financial interest. Appointees who are SGEs are required to complete and submit a Confidential Financial Disclosure Report (OGE-450 form) and, upon request, USDA will assist SGEs in preparing these financial reports. To ensure the highest level of compliance with applicable ethical standards USDA will provide ethics training to SGEs on an annual basis. The provisions of these paragraphs are not meant to exhaustively cover all Federal ethics laws and do not affect any other statutory or regulatory obligations to which advisory committee members are subject.

12e. Equal Opportunity Statement

Equal opportunity practices, in line with USDA policies, will be followed in all membership appointments to the committee. To ensure that the recommendations of the committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

13. Subcommittees

Subject to the DFO's approval, subcommittees may be created in accordance to 41 CFR 102-3.35 (b). Subcommittees must operate under the direction of the DFO; report their recommendations back to the parent committee, and not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency.

14. Recordkeeping

The records of this Committee, formally and informally established subcommittees, or other subgroups of the committee, shall be handled in accordance with GRS 6.2 or other approved agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552. Information about this Committee is available online at:

http://www.nass.usda.gov/About_NASS/Advisory_Committee_on_Agriculture_Statistics/index.asp

15. Filing Date

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